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Anti-Communists in Portugal Appear Unsure of Next Move

Portuguese anti-Communists appear unsure of their next move after their initial expressions of opposition to the appointment of Vasco Goncalves as armed forces chief of staff and his replacement as prime minister by Admiral Azevedo.

Supporters of the anti-Goncalves group in the military led by Melo Antunes reportedly are considering several options, in the hope that they still might avoid a military confrontation.

A member of the Antunes group told [redacted] that there are four possibilities:

- Put pressure on President Costa Gomes to remove Goncalves by having military units refuse to recognize Goncalves as chief of staff.
- Work for the restructuring of the armed forces general assembly to make it more representative, thereby converting it from a threat to an asset.
- Organize a classic military coup in Lisbon with the support of the internal security forces led by General Otelo de Carvalho.
- Organize military-civilian forces beginning in the north and gradually isolate Lisbon.

So far the Antunes group appears to be pursuing the first option. General Carvalho has placed his internal security command under the direct authority of the president, removing it from any threat of control by Goncalves. According to a Lisbon paper, the pro-Goncalves commander of the Northern Military Region has been called back to Lisbon. No reason was given.

Portuguese army units in the Azores (See Portuguese... Page 4)

Soviets Request Willy Brandt's Help on Portugal

The Soviets have asked West German Social Democratic leader Willy Brandt to use his influence to ameliorate the situation in Portugal. Moscow's purpose probably is to put itself on the side of political compromise in Portugal, which the Soviets may see as the only way the Portuguese Communist Party can avoid further reversals.

On August 28, a Soviet diplomat in Bonn asked a ranking foreign ministry official to forward a "personal" message from the "highest levels" in Moscow to Brandt requesting his assistance in opening a channel of communication between

Portuguese Socialist chief Soares and Communist leader Cunhal. Brandt was also asked to use his influence with West European Socialists to provide economic assistance to Portugal without delay.

Given the uncertain situation in Portugal and Soares' anti-Communist views it is doubtful that Brandt will ever attempt to persuade Soares to establish contacts with the Communists.

In the message to Brandt, the Soviets express concern about the threat of civil war in Portugal and about the advances of the "reactionaries" there. Moscow also wants to "defuse" the situation in Por-

tugal to demonstrate that it takes the Helsinki agreements seriously.

The Soviets claim that they have told Cunhal that he was wrong in attacking the Portuguese Socialists; by implication, Moscow blames the Portuguese Communists for the current crisis. This is in sharp contrast with Soviet propaganda placing the responsibility squarely on Soares.

The Soviets told the West Germans that Moscow has urged Cunhal to restrain his supporters. This is the first such claim made directly by Moscow. It clearly is

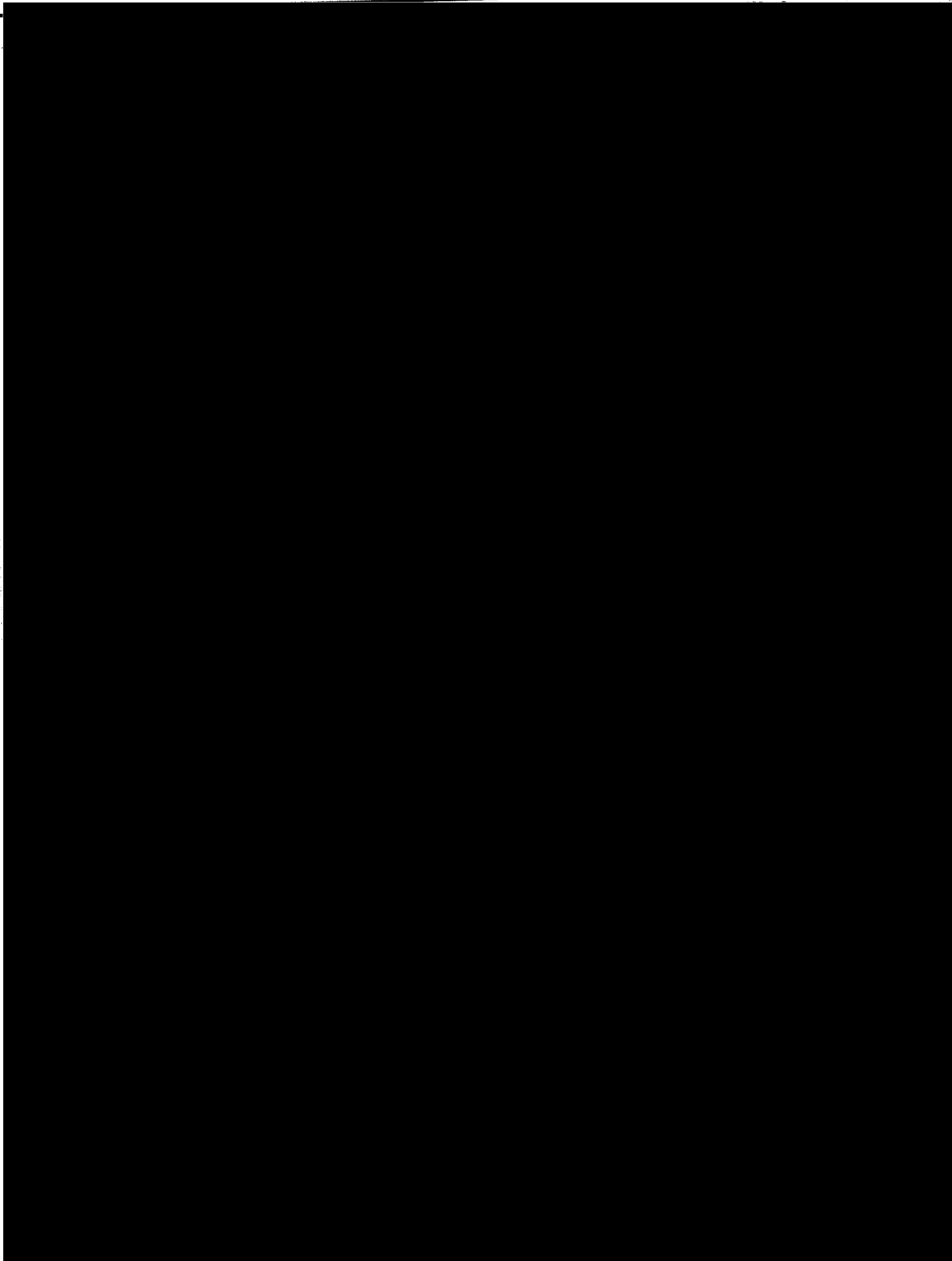
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Portuguese Communists . . .

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and Madeira have also declared their opposition to the government changes. These moves may be directly tied to Antunes' efforts, but if the situation continues unresolved, or Goncalves begins to assert his control, the dissatisfaction of these units on the Atlantic islands could become support for the independence movements that are now operating more openly in both the Azores and Madeiras.

Yesterday, the air force chief of staff, who until then had not taken a position on Goncalves, said the former prime minister would promote Communist interests in his new position. The air force chief said he approved of Azevedo as the new prime minister but that the question of the government faded beside the new controversy over Goncalves.

Despite these gathering signs of opposition to Goncalves' appointment as armed forces chief of staff, the pro-Communist leader retains enough support to make him difficult to dislodge. The navy, where Admiral Rosa Coutinho is expected to take over the chief of staff position vacated by Admiral Azevedo, would probably support Goncalves in any showdown. He also retains the loyalty of some

army units in the Lisbon area and probably in the southern military region as well.

President Costa Gomes appears to have calculated that his shuffling of the top military and governmental positions would defuse the political crisis by undercutting the anti-Communist faction of Melo Antunes. This gamble was based, at least on part, on the hope that the Socialist Party of Mario Soares, which focused its campaign on the removal of Goncalves as prime minister, would join the Azevedo government.

Meanwhile, the Communist Party—which yesterday withdrew from a front aligning it with seven far left parties—has announced its support for the change. Various spokesmen, including Goncalves, have indicated that when the cabinet is announced there will be only a few changes from the government that Goncalves had headed.

